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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND  
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND  
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER  
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC  
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Israeli Operation in Lebanon, Terrorism, Syria/Russia, Syria/Turkey (7/26)

**¶11.** Summary: Syrian papers reported a statement by the press office of the Syrian Ministry of Communication and Technology denying reports circulated by electronic websites to the effect that Syria possesses information about al-Qaeda and that Syria is ready to offer it to the US. The statement described these reports as "baseless," noting "they are simply distortions of honorable stances of Syria." The press office noted that when it asked a representative of the Sky News network about the subject, he answered in an official statement that the "news is baseless and the issue was not part of any statement or debate," adding that the network did not attribute any of these statements to the minister.

Papers also featured a statement by Russian President Putin upon receiving the credentials of Dr. Hassan Rishreh, Syria's new Ambassador to Russia. Putin stressed that his country attached great importance to developing Syrian-Russian dialogue about urgent regional and international issues. "Russia has strong relations with Syria, which is considered the most important country in the Arab world, and will establish active cooperation with it in the field of confronting international terrorism," Putin said. The Russian President underlined that the current crisis in Lebanon has brought about dangerous humanitarian consequences, confirming the urgent need to increase the effectiveness of the UN in international issues.

Papers also reported that Dr. Mohsen Bilal, Syrian Minister of Information, has described the Israeli aggression on Lebanon as savage and an embodiment of systematic state terrorism. Meeting a Turkish delegation, including parliamentary, media, cultural and academic personalities, headed by Mohammed Bakkar Oglo on Tuesday evening, Dr. Bilal criticized the US and a number of western countries for their bias in favor of Israel despite the crimes and brutal practices Israel is perpetrating against the Lebanese and Palestinian people. Dr. Bilal vehemently condemned terrorism, rejecting any link between Islam and terrorism, as terrorism is a crime that has no religion, color or race, while Islam is a religion of tolerance, coexistence and cooperation. For his part, Mr. Oglo strongly criticized hostile Israeli practices against the peoples of the region, backed by western countries, in order to control their resources, expressing confidence that these people will confront the Israeli-American schemes. He criticized the international community's silence on the barbaric Israeli crimes against Lebanon and Palestine, saying "we came here in

order to raise our voices over this silence."

End of summary.

#### 12. Selected Headlines:

"The Syrian cabinet is briefed by Foreign Minister al-Mouallem on latest political developments in the region. The cabinet hails steadfastness of the Lebanese resistance" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/26)

"Arab Parliamentary Union calls for an immediate end to the Israeli aggression against Lebanon. Speaker of Syrian People's Assembly al-Abrah: We must support resistance and cement its legitimacy" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/26)

"Syrian Ministry of Communication and Sky News Channel deny reports circulated by electronic websites on Syria's possession of information about al-Qaeda" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/26)

"Information Minister Bilal: The Israeli aggression against Lebanon embodies systematic state terrorism" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/26)

"Hizbullah Leader Nasrallah: Confrontation with Israel will enter the beyond-Haifa stage. Syria and Iran do not bargain on resistance" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/26)

"On the eve of the Rome Conference and in the wake of US Secretary of State Rice's visit to Israel, Tel Aviv expands scope

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of aggression against Lebanon. The National resistance engages in fierce battles with Israeli ground troops in Bint Jbeil. Speaker

of Lebanese Parliament Berri: Rice's proposals can't be implemented, as they threaten to incite internal sedition in Lebanon. Scores of Israelis killed or injured in rocket shelling by Lebanese national resistance. Israeli raids target the international peacekeeping forces in South Lebanon, killing 5 soldiers" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/26)

"Putin confirms strong relations with Syria, reiterating the importance of developing Russian-Syrian dialogue" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 7/26)

#### 13. Editorial Block Quotes:

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"History Has no Mercy"

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Omar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, said (7/26): "The current diplomatic activity concerning Lebanon aims to capitalize on the results of the aggression to serve the American-Zionist plan....

"The United States proves every day that it is not only a partner in the Israeli aggression, but also the decision-maker

....

"Before sending Condoleezza Rice to the region, President Bush opened Pentagon assets wide to the Israeli aggression machine to kill and destroy the Lebanese and their homes, installations, and infrastructure with smart guided bombs. Bush also stressed, after Rice's arrival, that there would be no immediate cease-fire.

"The 'neocolonialists' target the entire Arab nation and thus press the Arab nation to rush to defend its identity and dignity before we all drown....

"History does not have mercy on those who turn their backs on their brothers."

"Agenda of the US Aggression"

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Ali Qasim, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (7/26): "The United States insists on making more mistakes in the region as it refuses to stop the Israeli aggression on Lebanon....

"Instead of discussing the various proposals to end the aggression, Washington is trying to exploit the aggression to make up for the failure of its plan in Iraq, with a position that not only appears bankrupt but also carries the seeds of a new American crisis producing further disastrous consequences for the region and the world."

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"Might Does Not Break the Will of the People"

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Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, said (7/26): "The Israeli aggression against Lebanon shows the impossibility of annihilating the Lebanese national resistance and the failure of Israel's plan to sow sedition among the Lebanese.

"Israel is waging an American war with clear objectives. The evidence is that the rejection of the cease-fire came from the highest levels in Washington."

"The Bush administration has succeeded in spreading chaos in the world, from Afghanistan to Iraq to the occupied Palestinian territories to Lebanon.... But force will not be able to impose a new Middle East.... Military power can kill innocent people and destroy the infrastructure of countries, but it cannot break the will of nations and their aspiration for freedom, justice, and a dignified life...."

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"The Brutal War against Lebanon, Lies and Facts"

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Salim Abbud, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (7/26): "Those who accuse Hezbollah of engaging in uncalculated adventures and serving a non-Lebanese agenda ignore the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Zionist-American objectives in the region.

"These people are the echo in the Arab world of an international situation that twists facts for the sake of Israel and justifies the positions of Arab regimes subjugated by American hegemony.

"The liberation of the two captured Israeli soldiers is not the objective of the Israeli war on Lebanon. The declared and undeclared objectives of this war make us more convinced than ever before that Israel and the United States are the two powers behind the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri.... The aim is to force the implementation of Resolution 1559...."

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"Those Who Are No Longer Shy"

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Ilyas Khuri, a commentator in government-owned Al-Ba'th, said (7/26): "We regret that some Lebanese politicians, who insist on their falsehoods and indeed on their connection with the forces that are launching an aggression on Lebanon and working to destroy it and wipe it off the region's geographic, political, and economic map, are not happy that Syria is sending relief aid to the Lebanese people and that it is hosting Lebanese refugees

on Syrian territory.

"Those politicians turn a blind eye to Israel's terrorism, destruction, and massacres and continue their tendentious campaigns, but this time against the Syrian assistance. They are using malicious methods to try to hinder the arrival of this assistance, impose a blackout on it, and deny it."

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